

Introduced by Senator Escutia

February 22, 2005

An act to add Section 104324.27 to the Health and Safety Code, relating to environmental health.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 849, as introduced, Escutia. Environmental health data tracking.

Existing law establishes the Environmental Health Surveillance System through an interagency agreement between the State Department of Health Services, the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA), and the University of California if authorized by the regents, for the purpose of, among other things, tracking and evaluating a variety of chronic diseases in relation to environmental exposures.

This bill would require, pursuant to that interagency agreement, the establishment of the Interagency Office of Environmental Health Tracking within the department's Division of Environmental and Occupational Disease Control for the purpose of implementing the California Health Tracking Program. The bill would require the department and the Cal/EPA to each provide one 50% time research scientist as staff for the new office. The bill would state the Legislature's intent to provide funding to the department and the Cal/EPA for those research scientist positions in the 2005–06 Budget Act. The bill would prescribe the office's objectives over a 3-year period and would require the office to complete certain duties for the 2005–06 fiscal year. The bill would require any additional funding for the office, beyond funding that the Legislature may appropriate for the research scientists, to come from federal or private sources.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
- 2 following:
- 3 (a) Chronic diseases and injuries account for 75 percent of all
- 4 deaths in California.
- 5 (b) The medical and income-loss costs of chronic diseases for
- 6 the state in 2000 were estimated to be \$107 billion.
- 7 (c) Researchers have strong scientific evidence showing that
- 8 many of these diseases, including, but not limited to, respiratory
- 9 illness, adverse pregnancy outcomes, cancer, and developmental
- 10 disabilities, are associated with environmental exposures.
- 11 (d) If preventable environmental hazards account for even 1
- 12 percent of the cost of all chronic diseases in California, action to
- 13 identify and reduce these environmental exposures would save
- 14 the state hundreds of millions of dollars per year.
- 15 (e) The State of California has an inadequate ongoing
- 16 surveillance system to describe trends in environmental hazards
- 17 or exposures and environmentally related diseases, and
- 18 inadequate resources to carry out special studies to explain the
- 19 trends or to explore the policy implications of its findings.
- 20 (f) Environmental surveillance systems are necessary to
- 21 monitor the frequency and geographic distribution of these
- 22 illnesses and exposures and to protect public health.
- 23 (g) Ongoing surveillance of environmentally related diseases
- 24 and priority environmental hazards should be the function and
- 25 responsibility of the State of California.
- 26 (h) There are multiple agencies in California that collect and
- 27 manage health and environmental data, and those databases,
- 28 which could be used for tracking, need to be updated and made
- 29 uniform. However, there is a lack of systematic analysis of the
- 30 data.
- 31 (i) There needs to be a coordinating body that brings these
- 32 agencies together and promotes collaboration and sets the
- 33 priorities for updating these databases and systems. The cost to
- 34 integrate, coordinate, and analyze the data is only a fraction of
- 35 the cost of collecting the data.

1 (j) An interagency office of environmental health tracking
2 should be established and staffed jointly by the State Department
3 of Health Services and the California Environmental Protection
4 Agency.

5 SEC. 2. Section 104324.27 is added to the Health and Safety
6 Code, immediately following Section 104324.25, to read:

7 104324.27. (a) Pursuant to the memorandum of
8 understanding set forth in Section 104324.25, the department and
9 the California Environmental Protection Agency shall establish
10 the Interagency Office of Environmental Health Tracking within
11 the department's Division of Environmental and Occupational
12 Disease Control for the purpose of implementing the California
13 Health Tracking Program.

14 (b) As used in this chapter "office of health tracking" means
15 the Interagency Office of Environmental Health Tracking
16 established in subdivision (a).

17 (c) The department and the California Environmental
18 Protection Agency shall both provide staff for the office of health
19 tracking with one 50 percent time research scientist in the
20 Environmental Health Investigations Branch of the department,
21 and one 50 percent time research scientist in the Office of
22 Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. The research
23 scientists shall, among other things, assist local communities by
24 providing technical assistance to obtain and interpret needed
25 environmental health data.

26 (d) The objectives of the office of health tracking shall be to
27 accomplish the following over a three-year period:

28 (1) Coordinate the multiple tracking data collection activities
29 across various state agencies and work to promote access to
30 priority databases in order to integrate data into the California
31 Environmental Health Tracking System which is currently being
32 developed with a planning grant from the federal Centers for
33 Disease Control and Prevention.

34 (2) Oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the
35 final report of the working group established pursuant to this
36 chapter.

37 (3) Facilitate the dissemination of surveillance data to the
38 public and researchers and provide technical assistance on how to
39 interpret the data.

1 (4) Develop data sharing agreements, and develop procedures
2 to protect individual privacy.

3 (5) Develop a strategic plan that would include a mission
4 statement, critical issues, core priorities for research and
5 surveillance, identification of internal and external stakeholders,
6 and a work plan describing future program development.

7 (6) Collate and analyze data, including, but not limited to, all
8 of the following:

9 (A) Identifying trends and geographic patterns of disease and
10 environmental hazards or exposures.

11 (B) Analyzing hazards, exposures, and diseases with relation
12 to socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity.

13 (C) Provide baseline data and present descriptive information
14 relevant to policy formation that are consistent with existing
15 goals of the program.

16 (7) Develop a strategic plan, in consultation with the Office of
17 Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, for obtaining missing
18 information on chemicals as necessary for analyzing significant
19 environmental exposures and potentially damaging health and
20 environmental effects, including reports from the National
21 Academy of Sciences and other relevant studies.

22 (8) Produce a report to the Legislature once every two years
23 on the status of surveillance activities and related research
24 programs.

25 (e) The office of health tracking shall use the program's
26 existing advisory bodies composed of members selected from
27 impacted communities, local government, environmental
28 advocacy groups, the regulated community, labor, and other
29 nongovernmental organizations to review and comment on its
30 findings, to provide input on future directions, to comment on the
31 biennial report, and to ensure accountability to communities and
32 the public.

33 (f) Any additional funding for the office of health tracking,
34 beyond funds that the Legislature may appropriate for the
35 research scientists required by subdivision (c), shall come from
36 federal or private sources.

37 SEC. 3. For the 2005–06 fiscal year, the office of health
38 tracking shall do all of the following:

39 (a) Develop and sign cooperative agreements for data sharing
40 between the office of health tracking, the Division of Chronic

1 Disease and Injury Control in the department, and the boards,
2 departments, and offices of the California Environmental
3 Protection Agency. These agreements shall be modeled after the
4 recent Memorandum of Understanding signed by the United
5 States Environmental Protection Agency and the United States
6 Department of Health and Human Services to coordinate
7 collection of health and environmental data.

8 (b) Develop a strategic plan that shall include (1) a mission
9 statement, (2) identification of both critical issues and core
10 priorities for research and surveillance and internal and external
11 stakeholders, and (3) a work plan describing future program
12 development.

13 (c) Develop extramural proposals to seek federal and
14 foundation funds to establish pilot tracking projects, fund
15 additional staff positions, and develop solid cost estimates and
16 proposals for a tracking function.

17 SEC. 4. It is the Legislature's intent to provide funding to the
18 State Department of Health Services and the California
19 Environmental Protection Agency for the research scientist
20 positions required by subdivision (c) of Section 104324.27, as
21 added by this act, in the 2005–06 Budget Act.